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SONG *of the* COTTON HOER,

A Poem,

—BY—

DAVID H. FOLK.

—O—
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—♦—
1886.



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DEDICATION.

To the honest, strong-armed and hard-laboring Poor Men, this Poem is most sympathetically inscribed as a token of friendship, on account of the many disadvantages, impositions and burdens under which they are laboring; and as a token of a living hope that the time shall come when they will cast off the burdens and impositions of government, monopolists, sharks and speculators, and fix prices upon their products and industry, in a just and equitable ratio, in comparison with the non hard laboring and producing world's charges for business, official and professional services.

Yours Faithfully,

DAVID H. FOLK.

FREESTONE Co., TEXAS.

September 1, 1886.

a.m.p., May 17, 1923.

A POEM,
SONG OF THE COTTON HOER.

TIME—MORNING.

Now up the row,
And watch the hoe,
And now on 'tother coming.
I'm all the time
A thinking rhyme,
Or "gain and loss" I'm summing.

Oh! how I need
(Hoe out that weed!)
Some ten or fifty dollars;
And if I make,
For grass's sake,
I'll buy some hoes and collars.

And as for land,
Black, loamy sand,
I've got as good as any,
And with some help
(You little whelp!)
I'll make as much as many.

(Leave all the grass,
And I'll alas !
Knock you ten feet a sprawling),
The moneyed men
Will take it when
I count out market hauling.

I've left out, too,
(Tight, look at you!)
The hire of all the picking—
(Confound your skin,
I'll make you grin,
If you don't keep a kicking.)

It breaks my back
To drag a sack,
All day a constant bending;
And I am bound
To look around
For those on such depending

It looks like I
Am bound to buy
A few things. Well I know it,
But if your hoe
Is broke, you know
You've got your row to hoe it.

And there's no use
To play the deuce,
And leave the grass a growing:
Put to a stand,
'Twould soon be grand,
For grazing stock and hoeing.

It's now as bad
As any lad,
(That big old weed there, slay it!)
Though work's not high
No use to try
I ne'er can stand to pay it.

But had I hands
To work my lands;
But what's the use to make it?
We do the work
That others shirk,
And when 'tis made, they take it.

Let's see; I owe,
(Tight, hoe your row!)
For things of last year's cropping,
(Can you not see
We'll disagree
'Bout such half cotton chopping?)

Six pairs of shoes,
Some tens and twos,
My wife's and daughter's dresses;
One winter coat
And hat; I quote
From bill which so oppresses.

I also got
Sundries a lot,
There's no use specifying;
The merchant swore
That I'd deplore
The failure of not buying.

I bought in March
Two pounds of starch,
It's hardly worth a naming;
And yet deny
It would imply
Just what I'm not at aiming

Two plows I bought,
At cost I thought,
Two hoes with which we're hoeing,
And hames and chains,
Rope lines for reins,
Have me still for them owing.

And half the meat
Which we did eat;
Two sacks of Texas flour,
A stove and pans,
Lamp oil, by cans,—
Enough to make one sour!

Ten pence I found,
Lard by the pound,
I had no choice and bought it;
I did not say,
Of course, that day,
I could not pay, but thought it.

My horse lay down
And died, "old Brown,"
And left me for him owing;
And I don't see
How I can be
Prepared to pay no showing.

My crop will fall
Far short of all
I'm owing for. I'm fearing
Per cents must wait
Till through this strait
Of hard times I am steering

For what I owe
Them: as they know,
I'm bound to live. Taxation
Would soon play out,
Beyond a doubt,
At such extermination.

I mean to pay
My debts some day;
No man shall be forgotten.
Although I know
That times are so
There's naught now made on cotton.

We do not get
Pay for our sweat,
Much less for time and trouble:
And yet we fools
Will use our tools
To help hard times to double.

Now, as for me,
I'll try and see
What luck there is in swapping:
Perhaps I'll make
That way "a stake"—
The devil take the cropping.

That sorrel mare
Has ugly hair,
But she is good and blooded;
With such as she—
Tight, follow me—
I wish the land was hooked.

What do you mean,
Tight, when you lean
Upon your handle, gazing?
You lazy loon
When it comes noon
I'll send you out to grazing.

You know that you
Must, this year through,
Work for your bread and wages,
I'll never pay
My debts, they say,
With such as you, for ages

My taxes, too—
(Now, Tight you'll do)
And other debts I've counted;
With doctors' bills,
Caused by chills.
Have way up yonder mounted.

Oh! let us raise
A hymn of praise
To all the cotton growers;
I've lost my health
And have no wealth,
I'm one of "thorough goers."

I've toiled and hired
Until I'm tired,
While others hold communions;
Kept cotton low
And made me know
What's meant by having "unions."

Hush! Tight, I say,
That horn to-day—
Hush! don't you hear it blowing?
Hoe out your row
And let us go,
God knows this cotton's growing.

TIME—EVENING.

Pick up the hoe,
Away we go,
We've had our herbal dinners;
No care for sweat
With those in debt,
And those who'd come out winners.

I wish I had
Another lad
To help me finish hoeing.
I've a big crop
And cannot stop
To see who wants a showing.

In other lands
They get farm hands
Whene'er they want, by winking:
But here, if you
Want one or two,
You're put to work a thinking.

And when you find
They have a mind
To go to work, not willing,
These trifling tramps
And lazy scamps
Need, half of them, a killing.

I cannot tell,
Of course, as well
As some with Latin learning:
But I do think,
To eat and drink,
They should their bread be earning

They beg their way,
So people say,
They never think of paying;
I'd like to see
One fool with me
About just now a staying.

I'd put to work
This Gypsy Turk,
And make him earn his living;
Things don't to me,
By bills you see,
Come by a freely giving.

They have the "brass"
'To make them pass,
And set us all to weeping,
Sister, brother,
Father, mother,
Are joys in Heaven reaping.

Their friends are dead,
Their hopes have fled,
And thus thro' earth they wander.
With me they fool,
They'll get a tool.
And something o'er to ponder.

I've bread and meat,
For those to eat,
Who like to help to make it,
And if they stalk
Round me, I'll talk
And ask them not to take it.

I think I'll get
To-morrow yet
Upon this grassy hoeing;
But in the main,
Should't chance to rain,
'Twill set me back no knowing.

I hope 'twill not
Although I've got
No faith in Texas weather;
'Twill shine to-day,
'To-morrow may
Find mud upon our leather.

But, rain or shine,
No time is mine,
I must be up and going;
There's wood to haul
And rails to mall,
And God is only knowing.

And hot or cold,
And sick and old,
I must keep on a slaving;
As those I owe
Are men, you know,
Whose appetites are craving.

That grassy row
Has dulled my hoe,
But now's the time to slaughter;
The stumps and trees
Will sleep give ease—
I wish I had some water.

I'd go and bring—
But that's the thing—
Some for our present drinking;
But I declare,
No time to spare
And what's the use of thinking.

This cotton patch
Will make me scratch,
Like mother hens with chickens,
And should I find
I'm not behind
I'll settle up with Dickens.

I've toiled my life,
Myself and wife,
In vain, howe'er, to do it;
And I have made,
With skill and aid,
Whichever way I view it,

A living bare,
Such as I dare
Not tell the world of fashion,
Lest I should throw
At them a blow
And put them in a passion.

It's up a row
And down we go,
And up and down and going;
It's here's a weed,
And there's the need
Of plowing well and hoeing.

From dawn till night,
And left and right,
There's grass and work and sweating;
From year to year,
We persevere,
But toil for others' getting.

The moneyed clan
Together plan,
But what's the use of talking
To those whose ears
Have closed for years
To warning of much "hawking."

Your words are vain,
You're classed insane
And ridiculed by righters(?)
Some farmers, too,
Will join their crew,
Just like a fool for fighters.

You'll lose your time,
Your reason, rhyme,
And get a world of scolding;
Most ev'ry pen
Will show the sin
Of not the rich upholding.

• But had I tongues,
Ten thousand lungs,
The rich would surely know it;
I'd paint, nor shrink,
In black as ink,
The "face of facts" and show it.

But, by the way,
I'll say my say
If it does feelings ruffle.
"Big bugs," you see,
Are biting me—
I sting in this ground scuffle.

O, gilt-edge themes,
With skimmed off creams,
From Greek and Latin learning!
When shall ye cease
To mention Greece,
While we, the stone, is turning?

When shall we be
Again set free
From burdens of taxation,
And learn'd men's laws
At which courts pause
For cash's accommodation?

We ought to know
What means the show
Of freedom's celebration;
Nor join the shout
That leaves us out
As brutes for legislation.

But as it's time
To close this rhyme
And go and feed the cattle,
We'd better knock
Off on this rock
Our tools of life's great battle.

"Go by and bring,
Tight, everything
And hie on to the feeding."
I am a boy
Could I employ
The worst of all a needing.

"You'll find my coat
Close to the moat,
Beside a tree a lying,
And leave our hoes
At end of rows"—
That owl himself is trying.

"You'd better get
That plow I let
Old Snooks have, as we'll need it:
And bring it, too.
Now sir, do you
Me understand? Then heed it."

TIME—NIGHT. AROUND THE HEARTIE.

I'm tired to death,
And out of breath,
And out of cash and credit;
My luck is played
And I am flayed,
And yet a tear—who'll shed it?

What we shall do
These hard times through,
There is on earth no telling;
What we shall make
This year's at stake,
And we've no say in selling.

We are but fools
And useful tools
To do the work for others;
While we might be,
From debts all free,
A mighty band of brothers.

The merchant's clan,
Most to a man,
And ask their price and get it;
And we must pay
Them what they say
Is fair per cent.. nor fret it.

The doctors' hearts
Beat, too, for starts,
In unison together,
Charge what they will—
A bitter pill—
Our talk's not worth a feather.

The lawyers plead
For those in need,
At prices simply awful;
For naught they care,
We must forbear,
Their price is just and lawful.

The bankers meet
And then complete
Their skillful calculation,
And when the sheep
Are all asleep
They fleece them "like the nation."

The railroad kings
Form into rings
To buy up legislators,
Who make the laws
To aid the cause
Of those dire depredators.

Bondholders strive
To keep alive
The blessings of taxation,
That we shall sink
To ruin's brink
For their accumulation.

High tariffs, too,
Help but the few,
In joint co-operation,
To rob the land,
While we must stand
The burdens of creation,

Without such laws
As aid the cause
Of kings of our creation;
Although we make,
From gulf to lake,
The land an admiration.

And cotton's kings—
Soft-handed things—
Have but one mind and pocket;
They'll classify
And price and buy
And weigh it, ere they dock it.

“Cotton to-day
Is dull,” they’ll say—
“One-fourth cent low, declining,”
And thus compel
Us all to sell
At terms themselves assigning.

They would ne’er raise
All of their days
For prices they are giving;
Albeit they
Would have us say,
“It’s good to be a living.”

Thus times are so
That we well know
We ought these facts be heeding;
All clan to make
Their mottoes take,
While we the plow keep speeding.

We’ll never rise,
Unless we’re wise
Enough our work to praise it.
Then let us meet
Price cotton, wheat,
And let them give, or raise it.

Why should we toil
All day our soil,
For pay so very little,
While others charge
A price so large,
We labor hard; they whittle.

What is our life,
But one of strife?
No time for recreation,
While those that toil
Not in the soil,
Have sweet's intoxication.

Hot beds of ease
Spring up to please
Their bloated taste and notion,
And we must make,
Just for the sake
Of keeping wheels in motion.

Whose house is fine,
Where trails the vine?
Whose clothes are worth the wearing?
Who live at ease,
Save from disease,
And spend their thousands airing?

Speak out, you blind,
Let loose your mind,
Long time you've been forbearing.
By truths that show
Where'er we go
Let us begin comparing.

Let us be wise
And ope our eyes,
Demand just weights and measures,
And prices too
For what we do,
In these consist our treasures.

The millions eat
Our bread and meat,
And billions wear our making;
We spread the sail,
For ships we hail,
From lands where bones are aching.

The wheels that turn
By fires that burn
Are kept by us a going;
Coal mines and gold
Their wealth unfold,
While we reap not our sowing.

We get the tares
And worldly cares
And back seats for our trouble ;
Kid gloves and gents
Must have their rents,
If hard times on us double.

They've kept us down,
With price and frown,
To fight their daily battle,
And we should show
Them that we know
We're something more than cattle.

But "No," says one,
"We are undone
And what's the use of striving
'Gainst moneyed men
Whose tongue and pen
Would show that we are thriving.

"We must support
The world and court
And officers of station,
If we expect
Laws to protect
With just interpretation.

“Although their pay,
What e’er they say,
Is to us all aggressive;
And what we do
Is much more, too,
Upon us all oppressive.

“Expense is great
But men of state
Must be paid well for serving.”
That’s argument
With earnest vent
From those always a swerving.

Well, let them go
To—well you know—
And let us have the cheap ones,
If they will get
Us out of debt,
And quagmires that are deep ones.

But Smart, the fool,
And Vote, the tool,
Must keep discrediting ;
The government
Must have its rent
Like men a speculating.

Big pay, indeed!
Though we should need
Some meat upon our table ;
Still we must bear
All this, nor care,
As long as we are able.

No, just as soon
'Spect night at noon,
As me to tell them blandly
That I will vote
For men of note
To rob my pockets grandly.

My vote shall be,
Now watch and see,
For those who'll stop us taxing,
From a tipstaff
To those who laugh,
Now while their fortune's waxing.

I shall oppose,
In time, all those
Whose count in "vulgar" fractions,
Has robbed the land
Of millions, and
Are making still exactions.

'Tis thus I'd call
On farmers all
For oaths of affirmation,
That we will stand
All, hand in hand,
No more of speculation.

Fight tricksters through
One siege or two,
To rectify disasters;
'Twill surely learn
Them in their turn
We are the world's Great Masters.

They have not shown,
Save to their own,
A heart of human reason ;
Then why should we
Ask them to be
Our friends in spite of treason?

If we should pray,
Both night and day,
For laws for our protection,
Like moneyed kings,
Who form in rings,
What get we, on reflection?

But snubs and sneers
Which prove our fears
Are worthy of much laughter!
They ne'er can see
Or feel that we
Just equal rights are after.

If Mr. Wealth,
Just for his health,
Asks laws for his protection,
Pretentious quacks
Will sift the facts—
It's all right, on reflection;

While we must sweat
And toil to get
From 'neath oppress'd condition,
That sink in shame
The strong man's name
'Neath any recognition.

Take church and state,
For love or hate,
And find a ragged devil
Had better stay
From them away,
If he would seek his level.

It may seem hard
To thus discard,
And rail at men of letters ;
But where's relief,
Save but in grief,
From those considered betters?

Laws made by Great,
A reprobate,
And Gent, and Reputation,
And Captain Smart,
And Pure of Heart,
And Acts, and Deeds, and Station.

I'm tired of Sense,
As Evidence
Has long and plainly spoken,
'That we should make,
For Goodness' sake,
A change of laws all broken.

I'm tired of Tact,
In point of fact,
Taste, Eloquence and Charmer ;
And Judas Judge
Does, too, begrudge
A living to the farmer.

There, Money, too,
Has friends no few,
Who, in rich harvests, revel
At our expense,
While Common Sense
Should send him to the Devil.

I'm tired of debt
As any yet
E'er offered up 'vocation,
And if what's strange
Don't make a change,
Curse on our legislation!

What hopes, but slaves,
This side our graves
Can we e'er hope to cherish?
Then, let us strike
For what we like,
If we should in it perish!

Go to the polls
And "pool" our souls
'Gainst ev'ry combination;
Teach money kings,
And clans, and rings
They need some regulation.

They've robbed us long,
Yet we are strong
Enough to give them battle,
And we should heed
No more, indeed,
Their shallow tittle tattle.

They've made the laws
To aid their cause,
To rob us of our earning ;
And we have paid
Too dear in trade
And government for learning.

'Tis this to pay
And that, they say,
"The laws must be respected,"
And if you make
A small mistake,
Poor dog, you're soon detected;

Imprisoned, hung,
Your requ'em sung,
To tune that crime is raging
Throughout the land,
On ev'ry hand,
'Mong those who war is waging.

With bare-faced need
And hands of greed,
And hands of public plunder!
Yea, make them bleed
Till evil deed
Shall cause the world to wonder!

Let Wealth offend?
Some mighty end
Led him in, rather funny;
And if he's found
To be unsound,
He hushes all with money.

It's quite a shame
To speak his name,
With bad men in connection;
You do not know,
But may be so,
He'll run the next election.

And run and be,
For aught you see,
Elected by a number
That would put down
Most any frown,
And silence even thunder.

In vain we'd know
Why things are so;
In vain, for explanation
We look to those
Who should propose
Some better legislation.

care
Except But what ~~can~~ they
~~Expect~~ for pay,
And birds of richest feather;
And all you'd pray,
Or do, or say,
They'll flock with them together.

Thus, when they meet
In halls, they greet
Each other like arch statesmen,
The one most wise,
With oxen eyes,
Gets on the floor and states then:

"My trusted friends
We've toiled for ends
Which costs us pains and money;
We've now a chance,
If you'll advance,
To rob the bees of honey.

"We're in our prime,
And now's the time,
To hold a sweet communion;"
Those eat and drink
Must doubtless think
Themselves fit for this union.

With flaming eyes,
All looking wise,
All join in invocation:
"Almighty God,
Although the rod
Has fallen on this nation,

"May people find
We're quite inclined
To serve this generation
The best we can,
As any man
Who'll honor such a sation.

"But if our deeds
Should go to weeds,
May grace and strength uphold us,
'Till we shall run
Life's race, and done,
Then in thy arms to fold us.

“Help us all through
In what we do,
In every undertaking;
For in thy care
We hope to share
The peace that knows no breaking.

“The praise be thine,
Thou God divine,
Amen.” We’d better double
Our hopes for gain
And risk the pain
Of giving us some trouble.

And then they set
About to get
Good will of leading papers,
Who’ll for them howl,
Like wolves that prowl
And cut up midnight capers.

Hurrah! for bills,
Hurrah! it thrills
Through every vein and column.
If folks would lend
Their ears they’d mend
The looks of things so solemn.

The hills rebound
The dreadful sound,
'Till naught is heard but thunder.
Make so and so,
The law, you know,
To keep the devils under.

But, now, you mind,
If we don't find
Men to curtail expenses;
Those who will think
Fair speech and ink
Are not quite excellences.

Who'll legislate
For farmers' fate,
As well as speculators',
Whose selfish acts
Are stubborn facts
To make us agitators.

Who'll not talk 'round
When we are found
In helplessness contrition,
'Bout some neglect
That did direct
Our steps to this condition.

They've better sense,
As evidence
Has taught them to be saving,
To meet demands
Of Public's hands
That everything is craving.

But if these will
Not fill the bill
Just count me out in voting;
I'll be, God knows,
At ends of rows
To know who's worth on doting.

I'll bear the toil
Of life's rich soil,
Of all abominations,
Till care-worn age
Shall end this stage
Of active operations.

Oh! for a time
To change this rhyme,
And change the price of cotton;
A time to change
All that is strange,
And hearts of men, so rotten.

A time when we
Shall all be free
From debts and speculations;
And pinching cares
That change our hairs
And change considerations.

A good old time
That's void of crime,
When men shall act in reason;
And every brow
That's wrinkled, now,
Shall smile a happy season.

A time when laws
Shall serve the cause
For which they were intended;
Nor money's friends
Defeat the ends
Of justice, long offended.

But, if I dream,
God grant the theme
May yet some harp awaken,
Whose stiring notes
Won't be "wild oats"
Like these I've undertaken.



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